



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS AND PRIVILEGES

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**TUESDAY, 24 JANUARY 2017
ROOM 29, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mr Adrian McQuillan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Doug Beattie MLA
Ms Joanne Bunting MLA
Mr Sammy Douglas MLA
Mrs Emma Little Pengelly MLA

In Attendance: Mr Shane McAteer (Assembly Clerk)
Mrs Clairita Frazer (Assistant Clerk)
Ms Alison Ferguson (Clerical Officer)

Apologies Mr Cathal Boylan MLA (Chairperson)
Ms Paula Bradshaw MLA
Mr Gerry Carroll MLA
Ms Linda Dillon MLA
Mr Sean Lynch MLA
Mr Richie McPhillips MLA

The meeting commenced at 2.10pm in public session.

Members noted that the business from agenda item 5 would be held in closed session in line with normal protocol.

1. Apologies

As detailed above.

2. Declaration of Members' Interests

Members noted that they are obliged to declare any relevant financial or other interests before and during each Committee meeting.

3. Draft minutes of the meeting held on 7th December 2016.

The draft minutes of the meetings held on 7th December 2016 were agreed and will be published on the Committee website.

4. Matters Arising

Members noted two Assembly Research papers – one on All Party Groups and one on Training for Members on Standards Issues - and that these papers will be published on the Assembly website in due course.

Agreed: that, in light of dissolution on 26 January 2017, the Committee recommends that the successor Committee considers taking forward the agreed priorities of this Committee at the start of the new mandate. These include: Reviewing the Rules on All-Party Groups; Provision of training on standards issues for MLAs and their staff; Considering the arrangements for handling complaints against the Commissioner; and Reviewing the Direction on the Code of Conduct and Register of Interests for the Commissioner.

The Committee moved into closed session at 2.13pm in line with established procedure.

5. Correspondence from the Commissioner regarding complaints.

Members noted the Correspondence from the Commissioner on a recent complaint against a Member.

Agreed: that the Committee is content that the Commissioner for Standards need not continue his investigation in relation to the complaint referred to in the correspondence.

6. Recruitment of the new Commissioner for Standards

Members noted the indicative recruitment timetable for the recruitment of a new Commissioner for Standards.

The Committee also noted that, whilst the pre-appointment stages in the recruitment process can progress during dissolution, the appointment of a successful candidate would not happen until the next mandate. Members also noted that, given dissolution, it will not be possible for the Committee Chairperson to be represented on the selection panel as occurred in the previous competition.

7. Any other business

Decision to rescind previous Committee decision on referral to the Commissioner of Standards

Members noted that arising from the Committees' meeting on 7 December 2016, there was some press coverage of discussions in relation to this issue which had been held in closed session.

Agreed: to recommend to the successor Committee that it places a particular emphasis on the need for members to maintain the confidentiality of issues discussed in closed session and that the necessary training is provided for in this regard.

Register of Interests.

The Committee noted that an All-Party Notice was issued on Wednesday 18 January 2017 informing all Members that the final Register of Interests for the current mandate will be published on 25 January 2017. In this regard all members were asked to provide updates to their entries by 5pm on Tuesday 24 January 2017.

Dissolution of the Assembly

Members noted that, as this meeting is the last Committee meeting before dissolution, any correspondence received by close of play on Wednesday 25 January 2017, will be emailed to members for noting only.

It was also noted that, should any further correspondence be received for the Committee after dissolution, this will be held for the new Committee in the next mandate as applicable.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that, as this is its last meeting before dissolution, the minutes of today's meeting will be approved by the Deputy Chairperson on behalf of the Committee and will be published shortly thereafter.

Members were reminded that their Assembly tablet devices and charger should be returned to the IS Office before dissolution.

8. Time, date and place of next meeting

Members noted that, as the current Assembly will dissolve at midnight on Wednesday 25 January 2017, no further meetings of the Committee are scheduled.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting at 2.25pm.

Mr Adrian McQuillan MLA
Deputy Chairperson, Committee on Standards and Privileges

24 January 2017